



Jason & Emily Atkins

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The Race Against the Rain *by Jason*

We are working feverishly to finish the building projects our team is involved in. The kryptonite of our compressed earth block system, water, is on its way! The rainy season officially begins on May 15, but it varies from year to year, and this year it's been feeling a lot like rain in the mornings already! We have to get our roofs on, outer walls covered in plaster and paint, and window and door openings closed up before the first hard rain or our walls will turn into piles of mud and dissolve. Yikes!

In Bissau, our machine shop/new classroom building is coming along. This week I have been welding up the roof trusses and the walls are done growing – now they just need to be covered. In the next few days we will finish and install the roof and begin plastering. Hopefully by the time you get this letter we will have things buttoned down and rain-safe, and the rain won't have come early! I feel a little like Elijah, praying for God to hold back the rain!

In Mansoa, our teammates are working hard to finish up a pavilion and two houses. Their project has had much more to build, but they're managing it well and doing their best. The pavilion has a roof and the beginnings of its plaster, the first house has a roof and no plaster, and the second house will have finished walls soon and be ready for its roof and then plaster. There's lots to do out there, but fortunately also lots of hands. I'm not sure what the most recent count is, but last I asked, the McHargues were up to 30+ workers to get everything up and done in time to be protected from the rain! Our role in that project has been primarily support, trying to help where we can and make sure the blockmaker stays working. I'm very excited to have a place to work, in our new shop. It's not done yet, but already we've built a sturdy welding table and organized a few tools to be able to do the work needed to help finish the building. It isn't possible to describe how nice it is to be able to work with the proper tools, arranged on stands, instead of everything on uneven ground. My knees are rejoicing!



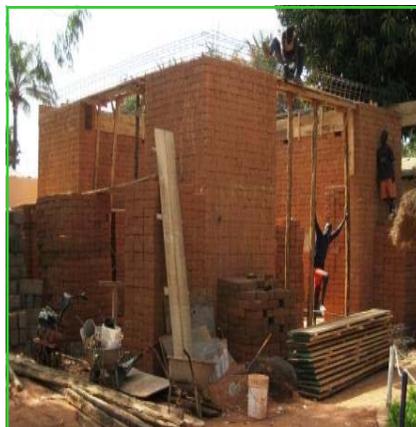
The braces for the floor going in



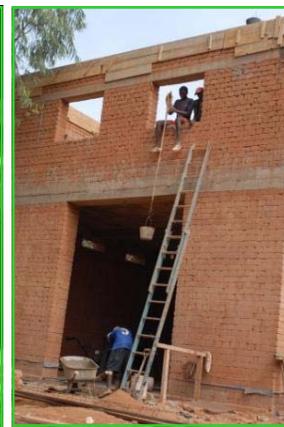
The braces for the floor up close



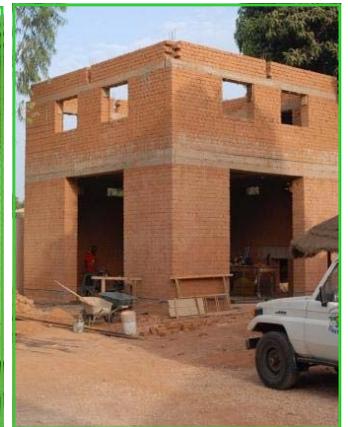
First the braces go in, then rebar and blocks. After this they poured the concrete and the floor was complete!



Putting the forms up to pour the floor for the second story



Hanging out in the upstairs



All of the blocks are up - now just to add the roof and plaster the walls

continued...

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Jason & Emily Atkins

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The Exciting Part of the New Machine Shop *by Jason*

The shop has a big goal, a phase we'll be moving into when we come back after having the baby. Guinea-Bissau is a beautiful country that God has blessed with incredible natural resources. Many of the crops don't require any work at all – for months tons and tons of mangoes just fall from the trees into waiting hands, and cashews grow in droves with no tending. However, despite that there is still malnutrition and people looking for food. We have the natural resources to be able to provide for everyone who lives here, and more. The population lacks some understanding and tools necessary to do that though. The machine shop will exist here mainly to have a place for us to build the machines that will help the farmers be more productive. When coupled with the agricultural teaching that the center in Mansoa will provide, we're hoping to be a great 1-2 punch against malnutrition in Guinea-Bissau, and a great way for the church to show God's love tangibly to a skeptical population.



Jason welding up the roof trusses that he designed. He loves working inside the new shop

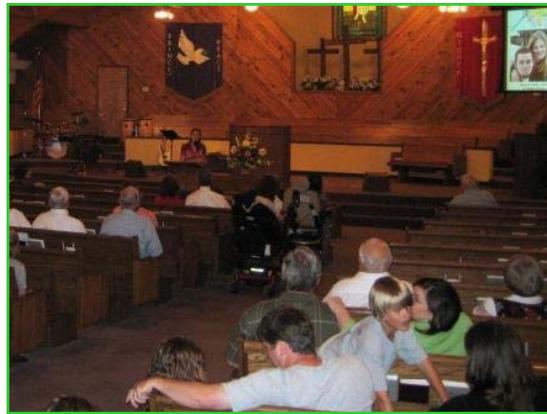
Our first project is going to be a hand operated peanut shelling machine. Jack bought a kit from the Full Belly Project (www.thefullbellyproject.org) to make these simple machines. We'll use our shop capabilities to be able to make bunches of them economically. They will help give more income to the farmers (shelled peanuts get a better price than unshelled) as well as provide protein to everyone who eats the peanuts!

After that, we'll be working on our own machine designs to help with rice harvesting. Guinea-Bissau was once able to produce all of the rice its population needed, but today we rely heavily on donated/imported rice for the country's survival. We're hoping to play a small part in turning that back around!

Time in the States *by Emily*

After traveling for five days by car, boat, and plane I arrived in the States earlier this month. Since Jason and I were already planning on coming home in July for about six-months to have the baby he decided to stay in Guinea-Bissau while I made a quick trip home for my sister Rachel's wedding. Over the past week I've been helping my parents run some errands and we are all looking forward to the big day.

So far I've been having a great time seeing my family, visiting the doctor and the dentist, having tons of people rub my tummy, and buying lots of supplies for the Youth Center and the machine shop to take back over with me. Even though it's a bummer for Jason to have me gone right now he's really excited about lots of the needed supplies that I'm going to be able to bring back.



Speaking at my parents church in Little Rock



Me and the baby at 16 weeks

I love telling people about all of the different things that are going on right now in Guinea-Bissau, so I've had a great time speaking at a missions conference in Michigan and a church service in Little Rock. Usually Jason and I talk together, so it's been a little weird without him, but if either one of us has the stage presence to pull it off it's probably me! :-)

I'm happy to report that I have seen the doctor about the baby and all of the tests that he ran came back normal – so far the baby is doing fine! I have been feeling great and I'm so thankful for the smoothness of this pregnancy so far. I have an ultrasound set up on May 13, to find out the gender of the baby and to see if there are any major or minor issues that would prevent me from going to back to Africa for a few more months.

So, while I am looking forward to getting back to Guinea-Bissau, I'm so grateful to have the opportunity to see the doctor, get some much needed stuff for the Youth Center, see lots of our family and friends, and most importantly be here for my sister on her big day.

Ring Party *by Emily*

April was the last month of making rings in Guinea-Bissau for our current group of women in Ajuda Bajuda. We wanted to end with a bang so at our last official training meeting we let each woman pick out her five favorite rings and take them home. They were so excited and they had a great time trying them all on and choosing their favorites. I took a few pictures of them clowning around and I thought you might like to check them out!



The party at our last Ajuda Bajuda meeting



Ligia is stylin with her new rings



Tina and Virginia showing off their new rings

Over the past year working with these women they've become some of my closest friends in Guinea-Bissau. I'm so excited for them starting their own businesses, but I am going to miss seeing them every week! Luckily we all live in the same city, so I'll just have stop in and see them at their new places when I'm out and about.

Jason + Emily